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**WALZ:** [RECORDER MALFUNCTION] --pages will sanitize the front table and the chair between testifiers. When you begin to testify, state and spell your name for the record. Please speak directly into the microphone so that our transcribers are able to hear your testimony clearly. Following each nominee, there will be an opportunity, opportunity to speak on their behalf. The order of testimony is introducer, proponents, opponents, neutral and closing remarks. If you are speaking on behalf of a nominee, please be concise. Testimony will be limited to five minutes. We will be using the light system. Green is five minutes remaining; yellow, one minute remaining; and wrap up when your comments when you see red. The committee members with us today will introduce themselves, beginning at my far right.

**McKINNEY:** Sorry. Senator Terrell McKinney, District 11.

**LINEHAN:** Senator Lou Ann Linehan, District 39.

**DAY:** Senator Jen Day, District 49.

**SANDERS:** Senator Rita Sanders, District 45: the Bellevue, Offutt community.

**WALZ:** And I'd also like to introduce my committee staff. To my immediate right is research analyst Tom Arnsperger. And to the right end of the table as committee clerk Morgan Wallace. And our pages today are Claudia. Thank you, Claudia. Please remember that senators may come and go during our hearing as they may have other meetings and committees. I'd also like to remind our committee members to speak directly into microphone and limit side conversations and making noise on personal devices. We are an electronics-equipped committee and information is provided electronically as well as in paper form. Therefore, you may see committee members referencing information on their electronic devices. Please be assured that your presence here today and your testimony are important to us and is crucial to our state government. Lastly, a reminder, please allow the pages to sanitize between testifiers. And with that, we will open with our first appointment: Marjean Terrell for the board of trustees of the Nebraska state colleges. Good afternoon, Marjean.

**MARJEAN TERRELL:** Good afternoon, Chairwoman Walz and members of the Education Committee. My name is Marjean Terrell. M-a-r-j-e-a-n

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T-e-r-r-e-l-l. I'm honored to take part in the confirmation hearing today. As many of you may remember, I was here for my first confirmation hearing less than a year ago. I was confirmed to fill the vacancy left by Michelle Suarez in November of 2019, and return today for reappointment to the board of trustees for Nebraska state colleges. My relationship with Chadron State started many years ago. I attended Chadron State for three years for my prerequisite courses before attending UNMC for one year to obtain my medical technology degree. I've lived in western Nebraska all, or most of my adult life with my husband's family, and I own and operate Terrell Farms ranch south of Hay Springs. Starting in 1993, I served as an adjunct faculty member at Chadron State for nine years. I was the on-site coordinator for a course required for all students selected for the Rural Health Opportunities Program, RHOP, as well as taught a medical-related course. The value of RHOP cannot be overstated. As an instructor, I saw firsthand how vital it is to keep the cost of higher education as low as possible for these students. When I taught the two-hour hands-on hematology lab every week, I had the opportunity to know well over a hundred students who were enrolled in the course over the nine years of teaching. Most were first-generation from small rural communities in Nebraska whose families had limited finances, and usually they were in their last semester of classes at Chadron State before going on the professional program. They expressed how important this quality of education was for them. Their hope was to be a role model for others in their family and community. And their mantra was "A great education can be obtained at an affordable rate." And to be successful and remain in the RHOP program, they were disciplined students. One of those students that I got to know is Angie [PHONETIC], she came from a small town in east Nebraska. Was an honor student active on campus, actually served at the student trustee for the Nebraska state board of trustees and had a part-time job while at Chadron State as a caregiver for a disabled young woman in the community. She went to UNMC for to successfully complete her medical degree, and now is a-- helps a small-town family practice in St. Paul, Nebraska. She was recognized recently by UNMC for providing outstanding teaching and mentoring of medical students during their family practice preceptorship, and as an outstanding community physician. Honor award is, recognized as a shining example of what a UNMC doctor ought to be in terms of a clinician, a teacher, mentor and community role model. Overall, the RHOP program has had a tremendous impact on the state. Since its inception, nearly 600 students have

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graduated from the RHOP program, 62 percent of those are employed in over 70 Nebraska counties. My most recent contribution to the college of-- serving on Chadron State's foundation board. I served for nine years, including two as chair. And my position on serving on that board ended in October 2020. During my time on the board, we completed the student athlete work complex, the football stadium, funding scholarship, and most recently funding for the math, science center for innovative learning. And thank you, senators, for supporting the bonding of this crucial project for the college. I also was a member of the 2025 strategic plan task force. Through the implementation of that plan, the chancellor and the system are prioritizing the importance of student success, academic quality, workforce, affordability and accessibility, and these are the priorities that caused, caused me to become excited about serving on the board. The position of the board of trustees in the state colleges to provide affordable, high-quality educational opportunities for all Nebraskans. And as an open-enrollment institution, the state colleges make higher education a viable option for all students, and they provide all the support services to help students succeed and prepare for life after college. And I'd like to share a story about a young man who came from the San Antonio, Texas area. He wanted to earn a range management degree, and Chadron State is one of the top three institutions with the highest enrollment numbers in the country for range management. The other two are Texas A&M and the University of Wyoming. And this young man came to Chadron and really struggled with his classes as a freshman. And one of the range management structures helped this student essentially get over the hump and we got to, my family got to know Will, as he did a summer internship at our farm/ranch operation. And we witnessed, we became-- and he graduated then in the spring of 2019 with honors. His family had been in the San Antonio area for several generations and have relocated to Nebraska. His older brother and wife moved to a local community and bought a meat market, butcher shop. His parents fell in love with the area and relocated. So not only did we gain Will [INAUDIBLE]. I've found my time on the board away, [INAUDIBLE] take on an important role in ensuring the long-term stability for [INAUDIBLE] critical [INAUDIBLE].

**PANSING BROOKS:** We can't hear you.

**MARJEAN TERRELL:** All right. So [INAUDIBLE].

**WALZ:** Marjean--

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**MARJEAN TERRELL:** Yes?

**WALZ:** Are you on the cell phone?

**MARJEAN TERRELL:** Nope, I'm on a landline.

**WALZ:** OK. That was better.

**PANSING BROOKS:** That was good.

**MARJEAN TERRELL:** OK. So, doggone it, I can hear it echo some times, so  
I didn't know what was going on.

**WALZ:** OK, you sound better now.

**MARJEAN TERRELL:** OK, so where would you like me to start all over, or  
what would you like me to do?

**WALZ:** Yes, start all over. No [LAUGHTER], I'm kidding. We do have your  
testimony.

**MARJEAN TERRELL:** Everybody panicked right there, OK.

**WALZ:** We had it in written-- we have it in front of us as well.

**MARJEAN TERRELL:** Yeah, yeah. And I was almost to the end. And like I  
said, it's just been an exciting part for me to be a part of, of the  
board of trustees. I appreciate what is going on, and I see real-life  
situations happening around me where the success is coming through.  
Whether it's the RHOP program, the RLOP, which is the law program, the  
Tecumseh, you know, with Peru State, you know, it's been really  
successful.

**WALZ:** That's great. Thank you so much. Do we have any questions from  
the committee? I do have a comment. I did not realize that Chadron  
State was in the top three institutions for enrollment numbers in the  
country for range management. That's pretty amazing. I didn't realize  
that. I appreciate--

**MARJEAN TERRELL:** Yeah, yeah. And I, I think it's even better now, that  
I think we've even beaten out University of Wyoming in the last few  
years. So it's just between the two schools so.

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**WALZ:** That is awesome. And I also want to say I appreciate you telling a couple stories. That really helps our committee understand how important the college experience is to, is to the students. I do have a question, if nobody else has a question. Can you talk a little bit about maybe some of the challenges that you see, that you look forward to working on in the future?

**MARJEAN TERRELL:** In going, in being involved with the strategic planning, and I really do appreciate what is-- having numbers and trying to be successful in making sure we're educating for the future, what the jobs are five to 10 years down the road and not being behind the curveball. And that's what I think is our challenge, is trying to make sure that we're always staying current and trying to figure out where, where we need to be headed with the state colleges.

**WALZ:** That's, that's awesome. That's good to hear. And what, what is one of the things that you most look forward to?

**MARJEAN TERRELL:** Just always seeing the success of the students, and having our numbers improve with the number of students that graduate within a four to four-and-a-half-year time frame. I just think that it's horrible that kids walk away with such terrible debt, and whatever we could do to implement it to keep going at the best pace so they could walk away with very little debt.

**WALZ:** Well, I certainly appreciate that being a parent who's still paying for college tuition and has one in college right now. So I can appreciate that. Marjean, we appreciate you spending time with us so much and giving your testimony. At this time, I will ask for any proponents. Any opponents? Anybody in the neutral position that would like to speak? We do have one letter for the record in support from Chancellor Paul Turman. So with that, Marjean, again, thank you so much for joining us today. We appreciate your time. And we will be getting together as a committee and making a decision. We appreciate it.

**MARJEAN TERRELL:** Well, and thank you for allowing me to do this as a phone, with my living 400 miles away. So thank you so much.

**PANSING BROOKS:** Thank you.

**WALZ:** All right, thank you.

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**MARJEAN TERRELL:** Thank you.

**WALZ:** OK. All right, the next appointment is with Jess D. Zeiss for the board of trustees of the Nebraska state colleges. You definitely won't have to reread yours. Welcome to the Education Committee.

**JESS ZEISS:** Thank you. Is that good right there?

**WALZ:** Yeah.

**JESS ZEISS:** OK, great. Good afternoon, Chair Walz and members of the Education Committee. I'd better put these on. Once you turn 50, I need these. My name is Jess Zeiss, spelled J-e-s-s Z-e-i-s-s, and I'm honored to participate in this confirmation hearing today to reappoint me to the board of trustees for Nebraska state colleges. Since joining the board of trustees in 2014, I've served as a member of the fiscal, facilities and audit committee, where we truly focus on the affordability pillar of the state colleges. What's an interesting stat here is 41 percent of the students who attend Wayne, Peru and Chadron are Pell eligible. The board of trustees are committed to providing the best possible opportunities and services to the students to complete their degrees with as little as debt as possible. My extensive financial experience has proven to be an asset for the state colleges and the finance, facilities and audit committee. During the last biennium, I advocated for a dedicated municipal bond financial adviser to ensure that the board met its fiduciary responsibility during the capital and revenue bonding process. Implementing this resource has helped improve our process for managing our bonds and ensuring the best market conditions to maximize the financial resources generated ensure compliance. The change resulted in significant cost savings to the Chadron State math/science renovation and addition project. If reappointed, I will continue to focus my efforts on improving the process further and ensure the very best results in the bond market to support the capital needs of the state colleges. One of my favorite parts of being a trustee for the state colleges is hearing from the student trustees. There are boots on the ground and a valuable asset to the board. The students provide feedback on how policies enacted by our board impacts students at the state colleges. The student trustees also offer guidance on initiatives that the board can support to improve the state college experience. As a trustee, I'm also very excited about the conversations underway across each of the state colleges aimed at

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giving the voice to diverse perspectives of our students and employees and the challenges that they currently face. Our campus communities have engaged with respect to the wide range of issues surrounding equity, diversity and free speech. These efforts will provide valuable insight for the board as we continue to shape policy, to ensure we're not only meeting the needs of our current students, but also ensure we continue to offer the resources and the environments necessary to make a four-year college education truly accessible to all these students. For the past three years, I've also served as vice chair of the board. During this time, we completed a national search for our new chancellor. We successfully hired Dr. Paul Turman, who is transforming the state colleges into agile partners for Nebraska by thinking about education and workforce differently, such as creating unique partnerships like the corrections scholarships. Peru State's partnership with the Department of Corrections establishes a direct pathway for criminal justice students to enter the workforce at Tecumseh State Prison upon graduation. Addressing the workforce shortage at the prison and retaining our talent in Nebraska is crucial. The board of trustees also approved in 2000-- approved the 2025 strategic plan. It reflects the state colleges' commitment to its longstanding mission while leveraging opportunities and addressing the workforce challenges facing Nebraska and how the state colleges can be part of the solution. The plan focuses on four main goals: student success and completion, institutional and academic quality, access and affordability, and workforce and economic impact. These goals are vital to the success of the state colleges and the state as a whole, and each has a number of identified outcomes aligned to move the colleges forward in each area. As a Wayne native, I understand the challenges of the rural areas served by the state colleges and realize how vital each college is to their region. If the state colleges are thriving in Chadron, Peru and Wayne, opportunities for students in the rural communities are endless. As a member of the board of trustees, I plan to continue my work to keep four-year degrees affordable, accessible for all Nebraskans and the state colleges. I thank you for your time and will answer any questions you have. Thank you.

**WALZ:** Thank you so much.

**JESS ZEISS:** Yeah.

**WALZ:** Questions from the committee? Senator McKinney.

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**McKINNEY:** Thank you, Senator Walz. And thank you for your testimony. I just had a couple of questions. For this corrections scholarship, how diverse is the student population that receives the scholarship?

**JESS ZEISS:** Dr. Turman could probably answer that a little bit more, since it's, it's pretty new. I know that it has just, has just come about, but I'm not really positive about how diverse that is, Senator. I'd have to ask Dr. Turman to answer that, because it is fairly new. I know we've just implement this within the last year or two. Is that correct?

**McKINNEY:** OK.

**JESS ZEISS:** So sorry, that's--

**McKINNEY:** All right. And last, maybe I'll have to ask Chancellor Turman this, but are the-- I'm curious of whether the students are given any cultural competency, education in race equity, equity education going through the criminal justice pipeline to working inside of Tecumseh to make sure that they're getting the right education to meet the needs of the individuals inside the facility.

**JESS ZEISS:** Yeah, again, I, that's-- I'm not sure exactly if I can answer specifics on the curriculum or any of those type of things. But I do know that the state and Peru are working diligently on keeping people in the area. One of the challenges that we continue to have, whether it's somebody from Omaha, somebody from Wayne, is staying in state. And I think that this adds a lot of value. So as for the diverse side on that, I don't-- I can't answer that again, Senator, I'm sorry. But I know that the state and this college are working very, very hard on that so.

**McKINNEY:** All right. Thank you.

**WALZ:** Other questions? Well, Senator McKinney took my question. But I am, I am also interested in your commitment to meeting the regions' or the communities' workforce needs. Can you just kind of briefly explain how you go about recognizing or defining what those needs are through your strategic plan, I guess?

**JESS ZEISS:** Yeah. Well, you know, a great example would be at Wayne State when they built the, the new CAT center, Center for Applied Technologies, understanding that, that area of the state, as well as



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Omaha, as well as Columbus, are huge manufacturing areas and have understood that that type of degree is needed, that type of workforce is needed. And so the colleges are starting to identify, as Marjean said earlier, starting to identify the jobs that we need to focus our educational efforts on to keep people in the state. You know, Wayne, we're talking about Peru and the corrections side, the math/science in Chadron, the new building out there, and you talked about rangeland. I mean, we're identifying, I don't want to use the word niche, because I don't know if I like that word, but we're identifying the needs of those local areas. And I think we're, we're doing a really good job at focusing our educational efforts on that. You know, and that, that's, that's got to continue to be a focus, because one of the things I have a challenge with in my position is finding good candidates that want to stay in the state after they graduate. And I think the state colleges do a really good job of that.

**WALZ:** That's good. And I'm just curious, are you finding more partnerships with businesses as you're going out and expanding those?

**JESS ZEISS:** Yeah, and, and Dr. Turman can talk specifically, but one of the partnerships that, that Wayne State is really working on now is with Senator Flood in Norfolk, and his, I guess, project to revitalize downtown Norfolk and to start building that community up. I know President Rames has worked really well with Senator Flood for that. So partnerships, I know internships, all of those type of things are continuing to be of value. One of the things that we've done really well, too, is to work with the junior colleges, two-year colleges. And, you know, it used to be more of an adverse relationship but, you know, we all understand that there's a need. We all have, you know, a reason to work together, and we've done a good job of that.

**WALZ:** That's great. Any other questions? I'm sure Senator Flood would love to have a few interns on his [INAUDIBLE]. Thank you so much. Do we have any proponents that would like to speak?

**JESS ZEISS:** Thank you.

**WALZ:** Thank you.

**PAUL TURMAN:** Good afternoon, Madam Chair, members of the committee. My name is Paul Turman, that's P-a-u-l T-u-r-m-a-n, I'm the chancellor of the Nebraska State College System. I've supplied a letter for both

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Marjean as well as Jess Zeiss, and I have a lot of detail in there, so I won't replicate any of that. But I think one of the things that certainly brings a kind of perspective, but also an important perspective to the position, Jess's background and what he's not talked in great detail about in what he does for a living in the bond markets, is we continue to have a variety of projects. The math/science is a very good example of that, that his insistence of doing the financial manager saved, saved significant dollars, but also helped us time the right time to go to the market, and resulted in almost \$2.2 million more of revenue than what we were expecting for that project. I think when I had visits with each one of you earlier this year, we talked about the two different types of models, either a north or a south edition. The ability to actually go and adopt a building plan that aligns with what we were hoping that project would be able to fulfill stems from, I think, his insistence and the guidance that he brings to the rest of the board in these areas, in addition to, I think, just our approach to strategic planning. I think within the first couple of weeks of me taking this position, Jess and a number of the other board members who are on the executive committee advocated for a strong, data-driven strategic plan, which I think you've had an opportunity to see, not only where have we been in the last 10 years and where we want to go and how do we set benchmarks to try to accomplish those goals. And so I think he brings that type of perspective to this board as well. As we deal with questions, if you have anything about workforce, I certainly can talk a little bit about the corrections. I'd be happy to do that in support of this nomination, but I'd answer any questions you have.

**WALZ:** Senator, Senator McKinney.

**McKINNEY:** Thank you. Chancellor Turman, kind of to follow up with the question I had previously, how diverse is the student population that receives the scholarship to work in corrections?

**PAUL TURMAN:** Very good question. I don't have the exact details, but I certainly can provide that to you and the committee. I can give you a little bit of sense of the process. And so last year when that was approved, it was very, very late in August, and so actually a week before we started the semester. The intent was if it had been approved last March, we would have had the opportunity to go out and recruit students into that program. And so it delayed it a little bit. We've been able to do some of the, the construction, the simulation

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facilities and everything are almost finished. And we are now recruiting the first entering class for that program. And so we've hired a long-term employee from Corrections who had worked at Tecumseh for almost 20 years, who is now working with school districts, talking with potential candidates, also looking at people who have had careers in the military and have a desire to come back and be able to get that program completed. And so right now, we have 15 of the 25 slots have been designated through an interview process that we facilitate with the Corrections. So it's a partnership with our staff and staff that we have at Peru who also had worked at Corrections for a number of years. And I think in conversations with the director, Director Frakes, rehabilitation really is that fundamental goal. And we've designed, I think, a program that makes sure that anyone who finishes it goes into working at Tecumseh or any of our state facilities has that notion that they'll have gone through six different internship semesters that adequately prepare them for doing, I think, the very things that you had mentioned. But I'll provide-- I just gave our board an update of we have 15, we're trying to get to the 25. But I can give you a breakdown of what the student population looks like for that program.

**McKINNEY:** OK. My other question, I was-- I went to the website to look at the, the membership of the board of trustees. And one thing that stuck out to me, outside of the student trustees, there's a lack of diversity. And I think the Governor has, the Governor appoints, and I guess my, kind of my big question is, as chancellor, could you-- is it within your role to try to encourage the Governor to appoint more diverse candidates to the board of trustees? And being as though we have an issue with return-- retaining diverse candidates, well, diverse talent in our state, how is the, the state colleges, what are you guys doing to make sure that we return diverse candidates when there aren't diverse individuals on the board of trustees?

**PAUL TURMAN:** Sure. Very good question. I think maybe the best way for me to respond is to note that I think it's my job as a chancellor to find ways to recruit more individuals who are interested in serving in these types of positions and making sure that it creates a level of diversity as much as we can. We had Michelle Suarez, who Marjean was able to replace a year ago, and hopefully again to serve in that capacity. And it's also trying to find individuals that have a range of diversity across the geographic locations of the state. And I think that was part of the reason why Marjean was selected by the Governor

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from a potential pool of candidates that they had. I advocated, certainly in my engagement with the Governor for both Jess and Marjean to be reappointed simply because of the continuity that it brings. But I think that it rests on me to make sure that I'm finding the individuals who want to serve and encourage them to serve and show the impact that they can have by doing so.

**McKINNEY:** All right. Thank you.

**WALZ:** All right, thank you for your testimony today.

**PAUL TURMAN:** Thank you.

**WALZ:** We appreciate it. Any other proponents? Any opponents? Anybody who would like to speak in the neutral? We did have one letter for the record in support from Chancellor Paul Turman. Thank you again for coming today and speaking with us. Our next appointment is William Scott Wilson for the Coordinating Commission for the Postsecondary Education. Welcome.

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Thank you.

**WALZ:** Thanks for coming today.

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Good afternoon, Senators, my name is William Wilson, W-i-l-l-i-a-m W-i-l-s-o-n. And I don't have any prepared remarks today, but I thought I'd tell you a little bit about myself, a little bit about my experiences and, and what I've learned so far being on this commission for around ten years now. I live in Plattsmouth, I'm a product of Nebraska. I went to Papillion High, and it's kind of funny we're talking about state colleges, but I'm a Wayne State graduate. So we'll stay within the theme there. But Governor Heineman appointed me some years ago, approached me and asked me to be on this commission. And then I, I just asked him why, you know, because there was a lot of academia on that commission. But he said he wanted someone from the private sector. There was about two or three of us folks that, that had that and try to round that off. I've worked for the phone company, which was basically Northwestern Bell, Qwest, U.S. West, CenturyLink and Lumen now for 30-some odd years. So I've been able to give that perspective to the committee on certain things. It was two years ago, I believe, I was elected chair of the committee, which only validated what I was contributing to it. It's been a privilege and an honor to

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be on it. I've learned a great deal. It's great to partner with you folks. We're moving the ball forward, I believe, in Nebraska education. Long ways to go, a lot of challenges ahead. There's certain things that, that we still need to work on, in my opinion. But I'm very proud to be a Nebraskan and to be part of the education processes and, and contributing where I can on that. And with that, I'll take any, any questions. I'll keep it short and sweet today.

**WALZ:** All right. Questions from the committee? All right, I have just a couple of questions. You've been on the commission for how long?

**WILLIAM WILSON:** About 10 years.

**WALZ:** About 10 years.

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Yeah, I, I filled in for someone that had left and then served a term. And then with COVID and all that stuff, my, I believe my date was a year or so ago, but the Governor Ricketts just got around to getting some of us in the, in the pipeline here to get in front of you all so.

**WALZ:** OK.

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Yeah.

**WALZ:** And I'm just curious, what are-- what would be one of the biggest changes that you've seen over the last 10 years?

**WILLIAM WILSON:** There's a lot of changes. Can I, can I talk to you about one that I'd like to see us all work on, is the attainment rate. It's, it's when we get our facts and numbers and, you know, our committee is just loaded with data, a lot of research. The staff's amazing. But I've worked on it since I've become a commissioner. Dick Davis is a friend of mine now, he was on the commission, and that's when I was representing District 3 in Omaha. And we spent a great deal of time, and we still do, trying to get folks to go to school. We've got all the scholarships and a lot of things available to them, but it's just a matter of having the right credibility, getting in there and, and improving on that attainment rate. When you line it up against the 50 states, it's kind of embarrassing a little bit. We're like third, I think, worst. So that's something that I've tried to strive and do the best we can to, to improve that.

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**WALZ:** And in what ways do you do that?

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Again, I partner with Dick Davis. We've actually went and visited a lot of the schools in Omaha. He has a foundation there, and I still stay in touch with him and do all I can. He's a great guy, good friend, and, and he's taught me a lot and try to participate with him as much as I can with OPS and try to help where we can.

**WALZ:** Good. That's good to hear. Any other questions?

**PANSING BROOKS:** Senator.

**PANSING BROOKS:** What do you do for your day job?

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Oh goodness. Well, I've been there 33 years, so I was a lineman. Used to climb poles, jump in holes and--

**PANSING BROOKS:** Wow.

**WILLIAM WILSON:** --had to kind of, you know, as you get older, don't do that. But I ended up getting into management. And so now I'm managing the engineering and construction group for the state of Nebraska. But I've spliced. I've kind of worked my-- I was old school, kind of work your way up through the company. I've managed all the crews and things like that. So it's, you have a lot more credibility when you've been there and done that, right?

**PANSING BROOKS:** Yeah.

**WILLIAM WILSON:** And so it made it easier. But that's what I'm doing now. I just found out-- I'd like to retire, but I just found out last week I'm going to be a grandpa for the first time so.

**PANSING BROOKS:** Good for you.

**WILLIAM WILSON:** So, you know, and I'm still paying for one's college as well, so. And that's out-state so--

**PANSING BROOKS:** Congratulations.

**WILLIAM WILSON:** --got to stay. I got to stay. But thank you so much. We're pretty pumped up about it.

**WALZ:** Senator Linehan.

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**LINEHAN:** Thank you, Chairman Walz. And congratulations. OK, I'm not  
sure I understand when you say attainment, are you talking about--

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Going on to college? Yes.

**LINEHAN:** From high school.

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Yes.

**LINEHAN:** Not getting the college degree, but just how many students--

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Right. Yes, yes, yes. So we have the ACE scholarship,  
the NOGs, the grants, the Pell. Getting that rate higher, getting a  
more-take rate, I should say, from all ethnic groups to get to school.  
I mean, yeah, it just, it just, it was pounded in my-- yeah?

**LINEHAN:** We're third in the nation, that's amongst ethnic groups.  
Because I don't think-- is that true of overall?

**WILLIAM WILSON:** That's overall. OK? Please.

\_\_\_\_\_ : It's third in the worst achievement gap.

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Yes. The achievement gap is third-worst in the nation.  
I might have misspoke there. Thank you. Yeah.

**LINEHAN:** That, OK, that makes sense.

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Yeah. I apologize.

**LINEHAN:** Right, OK. That's fine.

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Yeah. And I'm sure you, you know, you got these books  
from us so you get to see all the things that we get to see and, and  
that's one that just, we just haven't moved the needle on. And it  
would be neat to see us start heading in the other way with that.

**LINEHAN:** OK, thank you.

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Yeah.

**WALZ:** I thought you were still thinking.

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our COVID-19 response protocol

**LINEHAN:** Well, because but you're coordinating commission over  
colleges, right? Not, not--

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Yes.

**LINEHAN:** --K-12, right?

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Right. We are the coordinating commission for higher  
education, so that's what we do. But we have been reaching out K-12  
and working as much as we can there as well. We also have the  
scholarships too, the ACE and the NOG, that our commission or our  
agency basically runs, and we have folks doing that.

**LINEHAN:** Thank you.

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Yep.

**WALZ:** Senator McKinney.

**McKINNEY:** Thank you, Chair Walz. My question, my district has the  
lowest college graduating rate in the state. And I'm just curious,  
what are you guys doing as a coordinating commission to make sure more  
students from areas of high poverty are not only going to school, but  
actually completing and getting a degree and moving on?

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Right. Well, we, we try to communicate as much as we  
can. We try to make sure that we have staff visit every high school  
for as far as the scholarships that are available. There's a lot more  
work to do with that. But we try to communicate as much as we can with  
the folks at those schools, counselors, whatnot. You know, I know our,  
our, our, our charge is higher education, but it does start K-12. So a  
lot of that stuff we work on as, as best we can.

**McKINNEY:** What do you do when they're in-- at a community college or  
at a university? Is there still outreach?

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Yes, there is. Yeah, we are still responsible for all  
that. I got, I've been had the privilege to pretty much visit every  
place in Nebraska except, well, we actually did visit Creighton, they  
don't really fall within this. But at the junior college level there,  
we've been all over as well. And so we've, we have the same over--  
oversight with those as we do the regular state colleges or Nebraska,  
University of Nebraska.



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**McKINNEY:** All right. Thank you.

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Yeah. Thank you.

**WALZ:** Thank you. Any other questions. I see none, thank you for coming  
today.

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Well, thank you very much.

**WALZ:** It's a pleasure to meet you.

**WILLIAM WILSON:** Have a great day.

**WALZ:** Thanks. Do we have any proponents? Opponents? Anybody in the  
neutral? Do we have letters? All right, thank you for coming today. We  
appreciate it. And that closes our hearing for the gubernatorial  
appointments and [RECORDER MALFUNCTION].